Unexpected fame: Conservation approaches to the preparatory object. Proceedings from the International Conference of the Icon Book & Paper Group, Oxford 1–2 October 2018

https://icon.org.uk/unexpected-fame-conservation-approaches-to-the-preparatory-object

Unexpected FAME & unFORTUNE: the conservation consequences of celebrity

Margaret Holben Ellis

Copyright information: This article is published by Icon on an Open Access basis, after a 3 month embargo period, under a Hybrid Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (CC BY-NC-ND) https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/. After the embargo is over, you are free to copy and redistribute this material in any medium or format under the following terms: You must give appropriate credit and provide a link to the license (you may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way which suggests that Icon endorses you or your use); you may not use the material for commercial purposes; and if you remix, transform, or build upon the material you may not distribute the modified material without prior consent of the copyright holder.

You must not detach this page.

To cite this article: Margaret Holben Ellis, 'Unexpected FAME & unFORTUNE: the conservation conse[¬] quences of celebrity' in *Unexpected fame: Conservation approaches to the preparatory object. Proceedings from the International Conference of the Icon Book & Paper Group, Oxford 1–2 October 2018 (London, The Institute of Conservation: 2020). https://icon.org.uk/unexpected-fame-conservation-approaches-to-the-preparatory-object (accessed date).*

Margaret Holben Ellis

Unexpected FAME & *un*FORTUNE: the conservation consequences of celebrity

Abstract

Preparatory materials often receive new or increased attention—unexpected fame—when they are connected, either due to their appearance or function, to a more significant, valuable, or popular work. Working within a new framework that organizes preparatory drawings according to their appearance, as well as their materials and former function, case studies are presented that illustrate the physiological and metaphysical transformation that can result from unexpected fame. Other consequences of unexpected fame can be practical and immediate: an increased risk for vulnerable media and unstable papers due to travel and exhibition, unnecessary cosmetic 'improvements' that remove evidence of past use, or a general shift in the way the work is interpreted, presented, and preserved.

Keywords

Preparatory drawing; sketch; sketchbook; taxonomy; materiality; conservation

Many factors contribute to the transformation of works of art on paper from neglected nobodies to celebrities of creative genius. Catalysts can include the growing popularity or overnight 'discovery' of an artist, genre, or school; a scarcity, either accidental or manipulated, of preparatory materials; or transformative events such as blockbuster museum exhibitions marking an artist's life event. Regardless of why preparatory works on paper acquire unexpected fame, notoriety does not necessarily guarantee their conservation fortune. The metamorphosis of meaning and function that is imposed upon preparatory materials by unexpected fame can undermine their interpretation, presentation and, ultimately, preservation.

Preparatory materials according to their appearance and degree of finish

The Art & Architecture Thesaurus Online, published by the Getty Research Institute, defines and categorizes a variety of preparatory materials on paper. According to the Thesaurus, preparatory materials on paper, specifically drawings, are ranked according to their appearance and have a distinct hierarchy, which is assessed by their degree of finish, an ordering system consistent with the teleological direction of traditional connoisseurship.

- A preliminary sketch serves as an aid in the initial visualization of a design.²
- A preparatory study is more finished than a preliminary sketch and concentrates on one portion of a design.³
- A preparatory drawing is done in preparation for a further work, often one in a different medium, such as a print, fresco, or painting. It is typically more finished than a preliminary sketch and usually shows marks of past use.⁴

According to the Getty taxonomy, then, a preparatory work is arranged along a creative continuum according to its appearance, specifically, its increasing degree of finish relative to a more final version of the same design.

Preparatory materials according to their function and physical evidence

Another approach to evaluating preparatory materials is to consider what each work physically is and its intended function. Using this rubric, preparatory materials remain part of the creative process, but are distinguished by what they are rather than what they look like. This method, centered on materiality and facture, is gaining popularity among drawings scholars. To cite an example, Catherine Whistler, curator of *Raphael: The Drawings* (Ashmolean Museum, 1 June–3 September 2017) recommends looking at Raphael's preparatory drawings in ways 'other than as stepping-stones towards the final painting.'⁵ Additionally, one recent publication on sixteenth-century prints from the School of Fontainebleau examines the working drawings used in the printmaking process, specifically noting telltale signs of transfer or tracing techniques.⁶

Conceptual process works and fabrication process works

Using function and physical evidence as defining markers, the first category of preparato-

- 1 Getty Research Institute, *The Art & Architecture Thesaurus Online*, http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat/, accessed 31 December 2018.
- 2 Ibid. Page link: http://vocab.getty.edu/page/aat/300015618
- 3 Ibid. Page link: $\underline{\text{http://vocab.getty.edu/page/aat/}} \underline{300081078}$
- 4 Ibid. Page link: http://vocab.getty.edu/page/aat/300068293
- 5 'A New Way of Looking at Raphael's Drawings,' Apollo Magazine, May 2018, https://www.apollo-magazine.com/a-new-way-of-looking-at-raphaels-drawings/, accessed 31 December 2018; Achim Gnann, Benjamin David Harwood Thomas, and Catherine Whistler, eds., Raphael: The Drawings (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2017).
- 6 Catherine Jenkins, 'Prints at the Court of Fontainebleau c. 1542–47,' *Studies in Prints and Printmaking*, Vol. 7, eds. Peter Fuhring, Craig Hartley, Ger Luijten, Jan van der Stock (Ouderkerk aan den Ijssel: Sound and Vision Publishers, 2017), Chapter Three: 'Drawings as Evidence,' n.p.

ry materials is conceptual process works. These drawings record observations, transcribe thoughts and memories, explore possible designs, or work out compositional problems. Conceptual process works may be visually related to a subsequent work of art, if one is created, but they are not physically involved with that work's manufacture. Art historians and curators seem to be particularly attuned to conceptual process materials, especially those that record an artist's initial impression or creative thought process, or can be used to track compositional changes. While the degree of finish of a conceptual process drawing can vary a great deal, ranging from doodles on the back of an envelope, a rough outline jotted down in a letter, to a highly finished modello, the purpose of the work is to record, realize, and develop an idea, and not to effect a mechanical action.

The second category of preparatory materials includes fabrication process works. These drawings are involved physically in the making of another work of art and will be considered in more detail shortly.

The distinction between the two process categories, just like those based on appearance and degree of finish, is fluid. A purely conceptual work can easily transition into a functional one. For example, before readily available duplication processes, an initial study could be quickly incised to create a second study on the paper below it.



Fig. 1 Preparatory materials can be subjected to cosmetic improvements in order to increase their degree of finish, thereby eliminating valuable fabrication evidence, conceptual changes, and provenance documentation. Traces of the former album page, to which this drawing by Goya was once mounted, have been retained. Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Three Figures Seated at an Open Window*, Album B 85, 1794–97 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Ernest Wadsworth Longfellow Fund, 63.984a). Photograph © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The physiological transmogrification of preparatory materials

Common to both classification systems for preparatory materials is evidence of provenance, dating, and previous formats. For example, a drawing by Francisco Goya y Lucientes (Fig. 1) retains telltale remnants of the pink album page to which it was adhered following the artist's death.⁷ In the quest to improve a work's degree of finish, seemingly unsightly historical detritus, such as that still remaining on the Goya drawing, has often been thoughtlessly removed.

The same impulse to render a work more visually finished and, thus, more presentable applies to intentionally minimizing distracting traces of facture. Many conservators have struggled with the dilemma of removing unattractive but original fabrication materials, such as pressure sensitive tapes, or reducing stray manufacturing marks, registration targets, or other notations for purely cosmetic purposes.

Improving the appearance of preparatory materials due to increased attention, not to mention financial appreciation, is an example of physiological transmogrification. While the words physical and physiological both refer to bodies, physical means the body itself while physiological refers to the body's functions. In other words, when a preparatory work has been physically altered to make it look more finished and less manipulated, the function of that work also changes.

One recently championed genre of works on paper serves as a case study in physiological transmogrification. Oil sketches on paper, typically associated with eighteenth- to nineteenth-century French and Italian artists, were typically landscape studies done en plein air and later reworked in the studio.§ Characterized by their portability, lack of finish, notations on colour and location and function as pedagogical tools, when they are ushered into the refined precincts of museum galleries, more often than not they have been fully cleaned and restored, lined with canvas and stretched, varnished, and put into elaborate period frames, thus camouflaging their original function and elevating them to the status of paintings.9

The metaphysical transmogrification of preparatory materials

When an anonymous preparatory drawing is discovered to be by a famous artist, it acquires unexpected fame. One example is a drawing of St. Sebastian (Fig. 2) that was attributed with great fanfare to Leonardo da Vinci prior to its attempted auction in 2016.¹⁰

Attribution, still the bread and butter of traditional connoisseurship, bestows new authority on hitherto unknown works and launches them into the demanding cycle of exhibition and loan, where they rack up cumulative lux hours and are vulnerable to the risks of travel. This is an example of the metaphysical transmogrification of preparatory materials. Metaphysical in the sense that, while the preparatory work itself remains intact, it has attained an aura that shapes a viewer's interaction with it, rather like the contortions created by a funhouse mirror.

The conservation consequences of celebrity

When an unknown drawing is connected to a famous artwork, typically one accorded a higher status like a painting or a sculpture, it can easily become a victim of fetishism. The greater



Fig. 2 The unexpected fame bestowed upon a newly discovered study for St. Sebastian by Leonardo results in a metaphysical transformation of its preparatory status that can affect its interpretation, presentation, and preservation. Leonardo da Vinci, *St. Sebastian*, ca. 1482–88. Photograph © Tajan, Paris.

- 7 Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Three Figures Seated at an Open Window*, Album B 85, (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 63.984a), <a href="https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/double-sided-drawing-itis-summer-and-by-moonlight-they-take-the-air-and-get-rid-of-their-fleas-by-touch-es-herano-y-a-la-luna-toman-el-fresco-y-se-espulgan-al-tien-to-three-figures-seated-at-an-open-window-al-bum-b-85-double-sided, accessed 31 December 2018.
- 8 For more on the role of oil sketches, see Jennifer Tonkovich, Studying Nature: Oil Sketches from the Thaw Collection, with contributions by Esther Bell, John Gage Charlotte Gere, Ann Honigswald, John House, Geneviève Lacambre, and Richard Rand, (New York: The Morgan Library & Museum, 2011).
- **9** The practice of lining works on paper with canvas and presenting them as more highly priced paintings has gone on for some time and continues today, largely in the marketplace.
- 10 The drawing, originally offered in 2016, has been declared a national treasure and will be offered again by Tajan, Paris, in June 2019. See http://auction.tajan.com/pdf/2019/Livret_2019.pdf, accessed 31 December 2018.



Fig. 3 Increased attention sometimes results in increased exhibition, which can threaten sensitive colors and papers. Pablo Picasso, *Saltimbanque Assis (Le Bouffon), Page 35 of Sketchbook No. 35*, 1905. Sotheby's, Sale L14004, 6 February 2014, London, Lot 172. Photograph © 2019 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

11 Sotheby's, Sale L14004, 6 February 2014, London, Lot 172, http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2014/impressionist-modern-art-day-sale-114004.html, accessed 4 January 2019.

12 Tate Britain, "Drawing from Turner: The Turner Bequest," https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/drawing-turner/drawing-turner-bequest, accessed 31 December 2018.

13 Miriam Stewart, 'Curating Sketchbooks: Interpretation, Preservation, Display,' *Recto Verso: Redefining the Sketchbook*, eds. Angela Bartram, Nader El-Bizri, and Douglas Gittens (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 163.

14 Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), Letter to Emile Bernard, ca. 1888 Apr. 12, Letter 3, [lr:4] and [lr:1] (Morgan Library & Museum, MA 6441.3, Thaw Collection).

popularity of preparatory materials that can be associated with popular finished works of art is no surprise to conservators. For example, enduring public affection for Edgar Degas ensures that a study for one of his paintings will be requested for loan more frequently than others, making conservators the naysayers when it comes to the loan approval process.

If the work in question is by an artist whose reputation has soared into the stratosphere, a modest conceptual drawing can also fetch an astounding auction price. For example, a page from Picasso's 1905 sketchbook measuring little more than 12.7 x 7.62 cm (5" x 3") (Fig. 3) was recently sold for £435,000.¹¹ Protected until then from the vicissitudes of framing, exhibition, and travel, the drawing's commodification could well have conservation consequences for its light-sensitive watercolours and poor-quality paper.

J.M.W. Turner's bequest of his watercolours to Tate demonstrates the actual conservation consequences of artist idolatry. Many of Turner's popular watercolours were eliminated from consideration for loan over a century ago, due to the fading of the indigo resulting from their over-exhibition to throngs of devotees in the later eighteenth century.¹²

Not surprisingly, the conservation consequences of unexpected fame are usually due to a natural desire to share the intimacy of preparatory materials with others. This presents a dilemma, especially in the case of intact sketchbooks. Miriam Stewart, curator at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum observes, 'One of the hallmark experiences of the sketch, and one that is inherent to its very definition, is the summary, ephemeral or diminished presence it holds as a result of its always-assumed relationship to something more finished, something larger, something more museum-friendly. The curator finds themselves often choosing the most visually compelling opening at the expense of what might be the true character of the sketchbook...'¹³ Celebrity often has negative conservation consequences, especially for preparatory drawings removed from sketchbooks as evidenced by framer's marks, mat burn, darkened paper, faded colors, tapes, and adhesives that mar the works' once pristine condition or eliminate evidence of their origins.

The inclination to show a work's most visually compelling aspect was the case with a multi-page letter from Vincent van Gogh to his friend and fellow artist Emile Bernard (Fig. 4). ¹⁴ One half of the folded page contains a sketch with colour notations of his painting *Orchard Surrounded by Cypresses*. It was this portion of the letter that was separated and displayed for

a prolonged period of time with light damage ensuing.

Another example from van Gogh's letters serves to expand the discussion. These seemingly unrelated sketches had been separated for easier display prior to entering the Morgan Library & Museum (Fig. 5). When they were rejoined according to their original configuration on the page, it can be seen by its slightly darker tonality that the street scene below was exhibited for longer than the fishing boats above it. On the rejoined page's verso, the still life above was displayed longer than the landscape vignettes below. The separation of the four drawings for individual display divorced them from the letter's context and disrupted their original arrangement.

Many kinds of information are lost when interfering with a preparatory work's original context or, as eloquently described by Irene Brückle, its 'material intactness.' Two self-portraits by Edgar Degas entered a collection as two separate works (Fig. 6). Close examination revealed that each head was originally done on half of a folded sheet of paper, which was later cut in two for display purposes. While it can be argued that separating the self-portraits to display them at the same time and properly oriented is logical, their separation resulted in a loss of information about how Degas captured his own image twice by simply turning over one folded sheet of paper.

Fabrication process works

The second category of preparatory materials distinguished by their materials and techniques includes works that bear traces of their role in fabrication, such as inscribed lines from copying and tracing techniques, or perforations and smudging from pouncing, as in cartoons for paintings or frescoes, and designs that are squared, folded, mangled, or otherwise linked



Fig. 4 The urge to extract and exhibit visually engaging portions of preparatory materials can lead to differing degrees of deterioration. Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), Letter to Emile Bernard, ca. 1888 Apr. 12, Letter 3, [lr:4] and [lr:1] (Morgan Library & Museum, MA 6441.3, Thaw Collection). Photograph: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.



Fig. 6 Separating two self-portraits in order to display them in proper orientation resulted in a loss of information about how Degas captured his own image twice by simply turning over one folded sheet of paper. Edgar Degas, Self-Portrait and Details of Hand and Eye and Self-Portrait, ca. 1856–7 (Morgan Library & Museum, 2010.117; 2010.116, Thaw Collection). Photograph: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.



Fig. 5 The extraction of four drawings contained in a letter divorced them from their context and disrupted their original arrangement. Vincent van Gogh, *Letter to Emile Bernard*, ca.1888 June 7, Sketch 3: Street in Saintes-Maries; Sketch 7: Fishing boats on the beach (Morgan Library & Museum, MA 6441.6, (Thaw Collection). Photograph: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

- 15 Vincent van Gogh, Letter to Emile Bernard, ca. 1888 June 7, Sketch 3: Street in Sainte-Maries; Sketches 4, 5, 6: Boats at Sea, Landscape, and Farmhouse in Wheatfield; Sketch 7: Fishing boats on the beach, Sketch 8: Coffee Pot (Morgan Library & Museum, MA 6441.6, Thaw Collection).
- 16 Irene Brückle, 'Spotlight on newly identified drawings in albums: Piranesi and his studio at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe,' *Unexpected Fame: Conservation Approaches to the Preparatory Object*, 2nd Icon Book & Paper Group Triennial Conference, Oxford, 1–3 October 2018 (London: The Institute of Conservation, 2018), 48.
- 17 I am grateful to Lindsey Tyne for these observations. Edgar Degas, *Self-Portrait and Details of Hand* and *Eye and Self-Portrait*, ca. 1856–7 (Morgan Library & Museum, 2010.117; 2010.116, Thaw Collection).

to the manufacture of another work. Fabrication process works related to the actual manufacture of artworks have generally not suffered to the same extent from unexpected fame as conceptual process works. In the author's experience, this is because the former's attributes are often not visually pleasing in a conventional sense.

Traces of past use are often perceived to be oddities, at best, or defects to be disguised, at worst. Also, artists less frequently sign, date, or otherwise personalize fabrication process works. Thus, the drawings' puzzling condition issues and relative anonymity make them less popular among collectors and less likely to have entered the exhibition rat race—past or present. The wallflower status of fabrication process works is rapidly changing, however.

Fans of fabrication process works tend to be those with an avid interest in materiality and facture, by and large, conservators, as well as curators and art historians in the trending discipline of technical art history.

The role of technology in the increased appreciation of fabrication process works

The steady march of technology has played a major role in the enhanced appreciation of many now archaic fabrication process works. For example, cartoons for paintings and frescoes, red chalk drawings for counter proofing, and any drawings made for the purposes of transferring a design are now obsolete thanks to easy duplication processes. Such curiosities have become objects of intense scrutiny. This transition may not have brought them the same degree of fame, but many fabrication process drawings are now valued as important sources of information regarding an artist's materials and studio practice.

Specialized imaging technology

Bolstering new avenues of inquiry into preparatory materials is the application of specialized imaging to reveal and interpret signs of past manipulation and original function. A case study in what can be discovered is provided by an unassuming drawing of *The Agony in the Garden* by Raphael belonging to the Morgan Library & Museum (Fig. 7). Its brown iron gall ink design is faded considerably and the incised lines and closely spaced perforations made for transferring the design are ruptured and torn. Identified as a cartoon, its precise role and even its direct attribution to Raphael remained uncertain.

Fig. 7 Specialized imaging can result in greater significance—and unexpected fame—for preparatory materials such as this cartoon by Raphael. Raphael. *The Agony in the Garden*, ca. 1503–5 (Morgan Library & Museum, I, 15, Purchased by Pierpont Morgan in 1909). Photograph: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

- **18** Raphael, *The Agony in the Garden*, ca. 1503–5 (Morgan Library & Museum, I, 15, purchased by Pierpont Morgan in 1909).
- **19** Raphael, *The Agony in the Garden*, ca. 1504, oil on wood (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, funds from various donors, 32.130.1).
- **20** Linda Wolk-Simon, Raphael at the Metropolitan: The Colonna Altarpiece (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006).
- 21 It is theorized that the perforations may be exaggerated using IRR because they contained the residue of the *spolvero* or fine black charcoal dust that had been tamped through them to transfer the design to a second substrate. Carbon-black pigments generally remain visible when imaged using IRR. I am grateful to Eliza Spaulding for her imaging skills. Practically every trace of the spolvero was gone due to the rigors of past treatments this humble working drawing had undergone over the course of 500 years; its presence was confirmed using a HIROX confocal microscope.
- 22 The medium of the underdrawing is liquid; most likely the pounced dots transferred from the cartoon were strengthened using brush and a carbon-based ink. I am grateful to Charlotte Hale for sharing her expertise in interpreting underdrawings in paintings and the Metropolitan Museum's IRR image with me.



Fig. 8 Raphael's cartoon (Fig. 7) has long been associated with a panel painting of the same subject belonging to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Raphael, *The Agony in the Garden*, ca. 1504, oil on wood (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, funds from various donors, 32.130.1). Photograph: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The drawing had long been associated with a small painting of the same subject by Raphael belonging to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 8).¹⁹ The painting was one of five predella panels of Raphael's *Colonna Altarpiece*; a proposed reconstruction of the entire altarpiece is seen in Fig. 9.²⁰

Imaged using infrared reflectography (IRR), the drawing's iron gall ink design lines become almost invisible, while its closely spaced perforations remain strong (Fig. 10).²¹ The IRR image (Fig. 11) of the painting reveals an underdrawing that closely corresponds to the Morgan's cartoon.²² By superimposing the IRR image of the Morgan's cartoon with that of the Metropolitan's

painting, an extremely close correlation between the pricked contour lines of the drawing and the underdrawing for the painting is revealed. Who would have ever imagined that this



Fig. 9 A proposed reconstruction of the Colonna Altarpiece shows a predella comprised of five panels; two can be directly connected to the Morgan's cartoon (Figure 7). Linda Wolk-Simon, *Raphael at the Metropolitan: The Colonna Altarpiece* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006).



Fig. 10 An infrared reflectograph exaggerated the perforations used to transfer the design to a second substrate. Raphael, *The Agony in the Garden*, ca. 1503–5 (Morgan Library & Museum, I, 15, purchased by Pierpont Morgan in 1909). Image: Eliza Spaulding.



Fig. 11 The underdrawing imaged using IRR reveals a close correspondence to the Morgan's cartoon. Raphael, *The Agony in the Garden*, ca. 1504, oil on wood (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, funds from various donors, 32.130.1). Image: Charlotte Hale.



Fig. 12 A second panel from the Colonna Altarpiece predella has been found to be associated with the Morgan's cartoon. Raphael, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, ca. 1503–1506 (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, P16e3). Photograph: The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

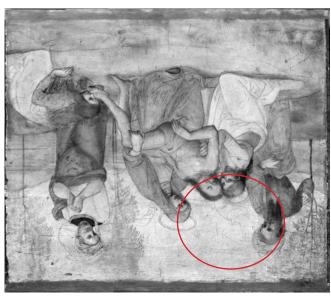


Fig. 13 IRR imaging of the *Lamentation*, reveals an underdrawing in a carbon-based liquid medium. When rotated, the underdrawing closely corresponds to the Morgan's cartoon. Raphael, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, ca. 1503–1506 (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, P16e3). Image: Gianfranco Pocobene.

23 Raphael, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, ca. 1503–1506 (The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, P16e3).

24 Both underdrawings are also done in a carbon black containing liquid medium. I am grateful to Gianfranco Pocobene for sharing his expertise in interpreting underdrawings in paintings and the Gardner Museum's IRR image with me.

unassuming drawing was likely used in the creation of a popular painting just two miles to its north in Manhattan? And how much more we can appreciate the drawing now that we know its original function. But the story continues.

Another painting from the proposed suite of five predella panels depicts the *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (Fig. 12) and belongs to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.²³ It, too, was imaged using IRR to reveal two underdrawings; one of the underdrawings appears upside-down. It has been rotated to its proper orientation in Fig. 13.²⁴ As in the Metropolitan Museum's panel, the figure of a sleeping Apostle can be easily deciphered in the lower right corner of the Gardner Museum's inverted painting. Superimposition of the Morgan's cartoon over the IRR image of the Gardner panel indicated—again—a very close correspondence: so much so that it is impossible to tell for which of the paintings the cartoon was used. It seems likely that the Morgan cartoon was to transfer its design to both paintings. Given its poor condition, its survival is even more miraculous. Knowing that the Morgan's Raphael cartoon may be functionally related to not one but two paintings does not make the drawing any more visually compelling. However, its value and significance as preparatory material is enhanced.

Conclusion

Regardless of whether a preparatory work is related to concept or fabrication, its true meaning can only survive if its *raison d'etre* remains intact. In its expensive Renaissance frame and elegant French mount (Fig. 14), Leonardo's modest exploratory sketch of St. Sebastian has attained national treasure status and superstardom. Now that it is insured against theft and damage, who will prevent a metamorphosis of its meaning and function and, more critically, shield it from the conservation consequences of unexpected fame?



Fig. 14 Viewers need to be mindful that their encounter with the newly discovered study for St. Sebastian by Leonardo is mediated by its presentation format. Leonardo da Vinci, St. Sebastian, ca. 1482–88 (image © Tajan, Paris).

Biography

Margaret Holben Ellis, FAIC, FIIC, FAAR, ACR, is Chair and the Eugene Thaw Professor of Paper Conservation at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She was founding Director of the Thaw Conservation Center at the Morgan Library & Museum until January 2017. She is a Fellow and current President of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC), a Fellow and past Council member of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC), and an Accredited Conservator-Restorer of the Institute of Conservation (Icon). She has published and lectured on artists ranging from Raphael, Dürer, and Titian to Pollock, Lichtenstein, and Dubuffet. Her research on artists' materials is similarly wide-ranging and includes Day-Glo colours, Magic Markers, and Crayola crayons. She served as Editor for Philosophical and Historical Issues in the Conservation of Works of Art on Paper (2014) and is author of The Care of Prints and Drawings, 2nd edition (2017).

Contact

Margaret Holben Ellis FAIC, FIIC, FAAR, ACR
Chair; Eugene Thaw Professor of Paper Conservation
Institute of Fine Arts
New York University
14 E 78th St
New York, NY 10075
USA
mhel@nyu.edu